

Pearl Harbor

One of the first things a visitor notices in Harry Scott's tidy room at Albany Care Center is his cap. It sits atop a set of drawers next to ceramic American flag and eagle bookends.

Harry, 82, a longtime Sweet Home resident who has lived at the care center since June, suffers from dementia, as well as heart and circulatory problems. He has his lucid days and his not-so-lucid days, but the Navy veteran always knows the whereabouts of his USS Oklahoma cap. The Oklahoma was one of the ships torpedoed in the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor 60 years ago this coming Friday.

The care center served its Thanksgiving

his
Ge

"He had to have that Pearl Harbor hat on Charlene says. 'He wouldn't go otherwise.'"

Who can blame him? The Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor was a horrific event forever etched in the minds of Harry and thousands of others who witnessed it firsthand.

Rarely a day has gone by during the past six decades when Harry hasn't thought about Pearl Harbor. The surprise attack on the day that lives in infamy resulted in the death of more than 2,300 American sailors, soldiers and civilians. Another 1,200 were injured. Eighteen ships, including the Oklahoma, were sunk or severely damaged, and nearly 200 planes were destroyed.

On a rainy Saturday morning this month, Harry sat in his room with Charlene and daughter Melody Archibald. He fielded a few questions from a reporter and confirmed

Asked what he
Pearl Harbor, he
Keep your nose
lean. Ken

Harry Lewis Scott Jr. was b June 2
1919, in Detroit, the third of six
Martha Scott's four sons. and

became an installer for the Venetian Blind Co. When the Depression came along, Harry Sr. went to work for the Allen Bros. Circus. The entire family traveled with the troupe.

"Harry's father was a clown, and his mother cooked in the concessions," Charlene says. Harry, then a teen-ager, helped feed and water the circus animals. It was the start of his lifelong love of animals.

One day in 1933 when the circus was in New Orleans, Harry enlisted in the Navy. He was 17.

After completing boot camp in Norfolk, Va., he was assigned as a radioman to the USS Oklahoma, a battleship built in 1914. Shipping out from its home base of San Diego in February 1940, the Oklahoma had some stops — and bumps — along the way before it ever reached Pearl Harbor.

"They went to Bremerton (Wash.) and ran into a freight train on a barge," Charlene says. "There was no damage."

During a hurricane off the coast of Mexico, an Oklahoma seaman went overboard and was never found.

Later, somewhere in the Pacific, the Oklahoma ran into the USS Arizona, the battleship that would later sink at Pearl Harbor with more than 1,100 of its crewmen entombed.

In the Oklahoma's minor collision with the Arizona, Charlene says: "They spilled all their honey buckets (toilets). I guess outside of the indignity of it, there wasn't much to it."

□

Dec. 7, 1941, the Oklahoma was tied to USS Maryland in Pearl Harbor's Battleship Row.

In the spring of 2000, Harry wrote this account of what happened to him in the

"The USS Oklahoma was torpedoed (five times) on Dec. 7, 1941.

"I was a Seaman 1st Class and my duty station was the Sky Control, which was above the deck.

"At the time of the initial attack, I was three decks below getting ready for shore leave ... Running up ladders to go to sky control, the concussion of the first torpedo threw me back.

'I was inside the upside down interior of the Oklahoma looking for survivors. I was carrying a light, and in the depth of all this destruction and mayhem someone pulled the plug on the light. Everything went pitch black. I was totally disoriented and didn't have a clue which end was up.'

Harry Scott

"Upon arrival at sky control, which was above the navigation bridge, we were hit the second time and I was blown off the Oklahoma and landed on the deck of the USS Maryland. I had fallen through the canvas awning covering a turret and two guns. All I had on was a necktie and a ring. A sailor from the Maryland gave me a pair of large shorts, which would be what I wore from the 7th to the 9th.

"My short stay on the USS Maryland (ended) when the Maryland was hit and I landed in the oil-burning water. I swam while being strafed to Ford Island where I was recruited to help rescue the men from the USS Oklahoma. We worked until the search was called off on Dec. 9.

"The most terrifying experience I had was during the rescue of the Oklahoma. I was inside the upside down interior of the Oklahoma looking for survivors. I was carrying a light, and in the depth of all this destruction and mayhem, someone pulled the plug on the light. Everything went pitch black. I was totally disoriented and didn't have a clue which end was up — only a short time, but it was devastating."

Thirty-two survivors were found in the Oklahoma; 439 crew members died in the attack.

□

On Labor Day 1941, 20-year-old Charlene Cummings of Oakland, Calif., took a train over the Bay Bridge with a friend to go to Playland, an amusement park in San Francisco. There, they met two servicemen on leave. One was a sailor named Harry Scott, and the other was one of Scott's Army buddies.

"My girlfriend liked the Army fellow," Charlene recalls. "I was killing time with Harry. I really didn't care for him."

Nevertheless, they kept dating until he shipped out to mid-October.

When Charlene got word three months later about the attack on Pearl Harbor, "I did a little bit of rethinking of how I thought about him," she says. "I realized I liked him better than I thought. I was really upset. I figured he had got it along with the rest of them."

On Jan. 10, 1942, Charlene finally received a letter from Harry saying he was all right.

By then, Harry had been assigned to the USS San Francisco, a destroyer that would be involved in nine battles in the Pacific. In May 1942, however, the ship came home to Vallejo, Calif., and Charlene was there to greet it. On May 17, the couple were married at the First Baptist Church of Oakland.

Less than a month after the

wedding, Harry was in the ship's pontoon plane with a pilot doing a reconnaissance flight 200 miles off the northeast coast of Australia. The plane was shot down, but the pilot managed to land it on the open sea.

Harry and the pilot floated on the disabled plane. The two survived by drinking rainwater. The pilot, who had a pistol, shot an albatross, which they ate raw. The men endured 13 days on the plane before the USS San Francisco located them and picked them up.

In mid-July, the Navy sent Harry to the eastern seaboard, where he was attached to a transport ship. During a shake-down cruise near Baltimore, he started hemorrhaging and was immediately sent to the Annapolis Naval Hospital.

fact that he had to keep going. I had to push him to realize that he had a 9-to-5 job and he had to get himself together. It took close to a year and a half before he started working pretty steady."

In 1944, the couple moved to Oakland. Harry got a job with the Pullman Co., performing air conditioning work on troop trains.

After the war, the couple remained in California, and he worked for the San Leandro School District as a custodian. Later, he did maintenance work for the Hayward School District. The Scotts raised their children in nearby Fremont, where Harry was an active Boy Scout leader.

The Scotts have four children - Harry Scott III, Jeanette Gelatt and Melody Archibald, all of Sweet Home, and Carolyn Yaws of Rowlette, Texas - 11 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.

Harry and Charlene moved in 1979 to Sweet Home, where their daughter and son-in-law, Jeanette and Larry, were living.

"We came up for a vacation and liked the area," says Charlene, who would later serve for 11 years as director of the Linn County Historical Museum in Brownsville.

Harry was the supervisor of grounds and maintenance for the Crowfoot School District near Lebanon before retiring in 1981.

For six decades, Harry has had trouble sleeping. It was one of those things that carried over from the war.

"Six hours of sleep would be a good night for him," Charlene says. "He used to patrol the neighborhood at night wherever we were living. He was a self-appointed Neighborhood Watch. He just didn't sleep much."

The attack on Pearl Harbor has always angered Harry, but



GRANHAM KISLINGSBURY/MID-VALLEY SUNDAY

Harry gets a visit Nov. 24 from his wife, Charlene, and daughter, Melody, at Albany Care Center.

in the early 1980s, he started forgiving the Japanese for what happened.

His daughter and son-in-law, Jeanette and Larry, lived in Japan for four years while Larry served in the Navy. Several years later in Sweet Home, the Gelatts hosted a Japanese high school exchange student, Takashi "Tak" Shida. Harry didn't like the idea at all, but he soon became attached to the teen-ager.

"They'd go fishing and talk for hours and hours," Jeanette recalls. "Tak called him Grandpa ... It started to be a healing process."

Harry's daughter, Melody, now 48, remembers that her dad never discussed Pearl Harbor or the war when she and her older siblings were growing up. "It's been since I've been an adult that he's talked to us kids," she says.

"The talking out of what happened helped," Charlene says, and so did an important trip 10 years ago.

In December 1991, Harry and Charlene and Jeanette and Larry flew to Honolulu for the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. It was the first time Harry had been back since 1941.

"It was great for him," Charlene says. "It took a lot of his animosity away."

On the morning of the other day that now lives in infamy - Sept. 11 - Harry was taken to

the Veterans Administration hospital in Portland to have dentures and glasses fitted.

While waiting for his appointment, he saw the televised images of the commercial jets slamming into the World Trade Center towers and the Pentagon. Harry then suffered a heart attack, Charlene says.

What was to be a brief day to the VA hospital turned out to be a five-day stay before he could return to the Albany Care Center.

The attacks angered him.

"He was quite agitated that kids were going to have to go back to war," Charlene says, "but he's behind Bush all the way. He's glad we're standing united."

With Sept. 11 still vividly etched in the nation's consciousness and military operations continuing in Afghanistan, the 50th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor will be observed five days from now.

A ceremony marking the event is scheduled for 7:55 a.m. Friday in front of the Linn County Courthouse. A number of Pearl Harbor survivors are expected to be there. Harry, who is member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association and the Veterans of Foreign Wars, may be one of them.

If he can't make it, you can be sure he'll be thinking about Pearl Harbor in the quiet of his room with his USS Oklahoma cap in plain view.

He'll never forget.